

## Minutes of Food Poverty Network Steering Group Meeting No. #01

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**Date**            **14<sup>th</sup> February 2023**

**Venue**           **Teams Meeting**

**Time**            **10:30AM-12:00PM**

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### In Attendance

<b>Sharon Gilmore (Chair)</b>	Food Standards Agency NI
Laura McGauley (Secretariat)	Food Standards Agency NI
Fionnuala Close	Food Standards Agency NI
Emily Boyd	Food Standards Agency NI
Aileen McGloin	<b>safefood</b>
Anne Parle	<b>safefood</b>
Darren Moan	Department of Health
Christine Dale	Department of Health
James Elliot	Department for Communities
Brian Luke	DAERA
Anne Marie-Murphy	Consumer Council
Naoimh Poucher	Consumer Council
Niamh Jordan	Consumer Council
Hannah Williamson	Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke
Ernest Purvis	Children in Northern Ireland
Tracey Colgan	Public Health Agency

Maeve Carey	Lisburn and Castlereagh Council
Kerry Melville	Nourish NI
Jonny Currie	The Trussell Trust

### **Apologies/Absent**

Meabh Austin	Fareshare
Fidelma Carter	Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke
Alexis Gamble	Causeway Coast and Glens
Carmel McConville	Consumer Council
Ciaran Donaghy	Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
Zoe Fletcher	British Dietetics Association
Grace Kelly	Queens University Belfast
Clare O'Neill	Fareshare

### **1. Welcome, introductions and apologies**

SG welcomed everyone to the meeting and all members introduced themselves.

### **2. Minutes from last meeting and matters arising**

All actions from the last meeting were reviewed and there were no outstanding actions or matters arising for Northern Ireland members.

### **3. Terms of Reference**

**AP** introduced the new Terms of Reference which have been updated to reflect the restructure of the group. The terminology in how this group is referred to has also changed to differentiate between wider network of stakeholders who are interested in food poverty and the smaller group of key individuals who attend the network meetings. This group will now be referred to as the AIFPN Steering Group.

**ACTION 1:** All members to review the TOR and provide any comments or queries by 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

#### **4. Update from Dept. of Health**

**DM** provided an update on the Health Survey. In the last Health Survey 21-22, the food poverty level was 4% which has decreased from 8% two years ago, but the most deprived quintile remains at 8%. Due to the cost of living crisis, the food poverty questions will be repeated this year rather than the three year interval as previously agreed. This means that there will be some comparative data for the last years.

The final batch energy support vouchers have now been issued with a 80% redemption rate.

#### **5. Update from Dept. for Communities in NI**

**JE** updated on the work on social supermarkets. Ards and North Down, Antrim and Newtownabbey, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon, Mid and East Antrim and Newry, Mourne and Down have all launched stand alone supermarket initiatives. Across other council areas there is a mix of activity happening. The four that had already carried out pilots are looking at how to transition into long term arrangements. Other Councils are working on already existing food support programmes (food banks/advice centres). This work is being funded out of the Welfare Reform Mitigations budget which is ringfenced until 2025. They are hopeful that this budget will be increased next year due to the cost of living crisis.

There has been underspend within the department and they have been asked to carry out an emergency intervention. The work being conducted at the moment is under the proposal is to provide money to Fareshare to allow them to purchase food and increase their supply across their members during the remainder of the year. It is hoped that this will be provided to Fareshare soon. In the long term, DfC hope to expand their relationship with Fareshare to enable them to cover the emerging social supermarket project across all eleven councils, subject to their agreement and capacity. The new models that are emerging has shown positive relationships developing with the private sectors as large donations have been provided from various producers.

#### **6. NI Action Plan (2022/2023)**

**EB** reviewed the current action plan and noted the updates. The updated action plan will be circulated to all members once completed. EB shared the NI action plan for 23/24 with contributions from members to date. EB asked that anyone who would like to add actions to this year's plan to send them through to LM.

**ACTION 2: LM** to circulate updated action plans

## 7. AIFPN indicator subgroup

**FC** provided an update of the AIFPN indicator subgroup meeting which took place on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

The NI Health Survey included food poverty questions in the survey for last year and this year due to the cost of living crisis. Usually the food poverty questions occur every 3 years.

Overall, the monitoring of both food poverty and food insecurity are strong in NI. The Department for Communities have been monitoring household food security through the Family Resources Survey (FRS) since 2019. Unfortunately during 2020, there wasn't a big enough sample size to obtain any data but for 21/22 there was a sufficient sample size and results should be published this summer. There were questions added on food bank use.

The FSA also continue to monitor food security through the Food and You 2 Survey. It's important to note that the results for the Family Resources Survey and the Food and You 2 Survey will differ as they relate to different reference periods, time periods and monitor slightly different things. They are therefore not comparable but the data remains useful.

Food Poverty Indicator Subgroup agreed to meet as and when necessary. Following that meeting, all members are content and no future date is planned at present.

**EP** queried whether there were any indicators specifically on children and whether any work had been completed to get a food insecurity indicator measured as part of the Programme for Government (PFG) outcomes.

**FC** advised that the Household Food Security Index has 10 questions relating to adults and 8 for children.

**ACTION 3: FC** to determine if 8 questions for children are used in the FRS.

There was a discussion between **FC**, **DM**, **BL** and **CD** to answer **EP**'s question. It was explained that there isn't a specific outcome in PFG for food insecurity but

this work would be captured under various outcomes, depending on what approach is taken. Each department will have their own strategies and policies which link to outcomes and within the strategies there could be a link to food insecurity whether it be supply chain or health and nutrition. It was noted that DOH policies aren't age group specific and take a whole life approach.

**BL** explained DAERA's Food Observatory report is essentially a risk assessment and he would be interested in the indicator subgroup monitoring work and whether a baseline could be established. He acknowledged that due to the cost of living crisis, indicators would most likely be red.

**ACTION 4: FC** and **BL** to meet to discuss the indicators.

## 8. Presentation from Guest Speaker - Consumer Council

**AMM** and **NP** presented some of their recent work.

**AMM** provided insight into the Northern Ireland expenditure tracker.

**NP** detailed a number of research projects which have been carried out (Consumer food shopping experience, Cost and availability of special diets, The cost and availability of a minimum essential food basket in 2022 and Consumer temperature check pulse surveys). These studies showed that consumers main concerns are affordability, quality, accessibility and availability of food. Twelve food focus group were arranged and discussions occurred in four waves. The discussions from the focus groups surrounded the minimum essential food basket, feeding the family, sustainability, tackling the rising costs of living and post-Christmas analysis. Negative feelings and consumer's coping strategies were highlighted.

## 9. AOB

**AP** advised that a date has been set for the annual conference which will take place on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023 in Dublin. After the conference the joint AIFPN Steering Group meeting will take place. Further details TBC. **AP** welcomed members to put forward any topic suggestions for the conference.

**SG** also welcomed members to feedback on today's meeting as it was the first Northern Ireland meeting and suggested a brief feedback session at the start of the next meeting.

**ACTION 5: LM** to email members and ask for any further members updates



## 10. Date of next meeting (to be confirmed)

**SG** proposed the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023 for the next Northern Ireland meeting and asked members whether there was a preference for this to take place virtually or in person. The general consensus was that in person with an option to join virtually would be most suitable.